

NEWS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

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8th Annual Economic Development Summit Set for November 4th

The Barry County Economic Development Alliance will host the 8th Annual Economic Development Summit on Thursday, November 4, 2010 from 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. at the Barry Expo Center just north of Hastings. Keynote presentations will begin promptly at 3:30 p.m. with hot appetizers and networking from 3:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

George Erickcek, Senior Regional Analyst with the W.E. Upjohn Institute will provide an engaging perspective on the state of the economy with a specific economic outlook for Barry County at this year's Summit. Erickcek monitors the economic conditions in West Michigan and shares his forecasts with local communities. At the 2009 Summit, Mr. Erickcek indicated that Barry County is "faring better than average in a tough Michigan economy." He noted that while Barry County experienced a net job loss of about 150 jobs during 2008, the silver lining was that over 500 jobs had been created to help off-set what was otherwise lost. "Many counties in Michigan did not come out of 2008 as well as Barry County," noted Erickcek. Job creation data is one statistic Erickcek reports on at the Economic Development Summit.

At the conclusion of last year's Economic Development Summit Erickcek advised the Barry County Economic Development Alliance to continue their focus on Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship. Heeding that guidance, the Barry County Economic Development Alliance Board of Directors created a formal partnership with the Entrepreneur Pillar of the Barry Community Foundation's HomeTown Partners initiative by naming two Alliance Board members as members of the E-Pillar. Alliance Board members Fred Jacobs, J-Ad Graphics and Brian Zatzke, Lumenflow Corporation stepped up to engage with the group to build a model that promotes entrepreneurial growth countywide.

Joining Erickcek at this year's Summit is Dr. Timothy Bartik, Senior Economist with the W.E. Upjohn Institute. Dr. Bartik's presentation (based on his forthcoming book, *Investing in Kids: Early Childhood Programs and Local Economic Development*) will present evidence that local economic development strategies should include as one component a plan for investing in high-quality early childhood programs. Research shows that several high quality early childhood programs have local economic development benefits that far exceed their costs. Dr. Bartik will share compelling data to engage community leadership to think proactively about the future workforce of Barry County.

Platinum Sponsorship of this year's Summit is generously provided by Consumers Energy, Barry County Telephone and Barry Great Start. Gold Sponsorship provided by J-Ad Graphics, Firstbank, Lake Trust Credit Union, Union Bank, Commercial Bank, the Gun Lake Tribe and Chemical Bank and will host

company booths at the Business Expo on the day of the Summit. Silver Sponsorship provided by Walker, Fluke & Sheldon. “We are fortunate to have such supportive partners allowing us again to offer the economic development summit to our business and community leaders at no cost”, said Valerie Byrnes, Barry County Economic Development Alliance President.

The Alliance will also include a Business Expo as part of the event this year. The Business Expo will be held from 11 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. prior to the Summit also at the Barry Expo Center with businesses throughout the county showcasing their products and services to fellow businesses and residents. The entrance into the Expo is also free of charge for visitors, businesses and residents alike. Expo sponsors include WBCH Radio and the Barry Expo Center. Please visit www.mibarry.com for details on showcasing a business at the Expo for a nominal fee.

Pre-registration is required for the Economic Development Summit as seating is limited. Please call the Chamber at 269.945.2454 to RSVP. The Expo is open to all and the public is encouraged to attend this free event.

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